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"CLIVE BARKER...MAKES THE REST OF US LOOK LIKE WE'VE BEEN ASLEEP FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS."—STEPHEN KING

Q&A

CLIVE BARKER



TAPPING THE VEIN

BOOK
FIVE

LES ETOILES



**TAPPING
THE VEIN**

**CLIVE
BARKER**

ECLIPSE BOOKS™



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HOW SPOILERS BLEED

**Illustrated by Hector Gomez
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and Fred Burke
Lettered by Willie Schubert**



DOWN, SATAN

**Illustrated by Tim Conrad
Adapted by Steve Niles
Lettered by Willie Schubert**



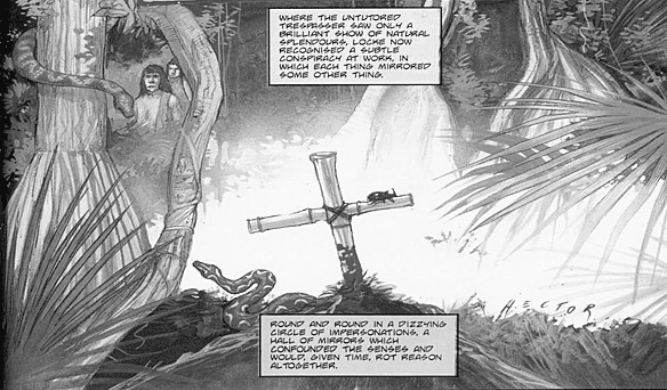
MONSTERS BLEED



LOCKE RAISED HIS EYES TO THE TREES. THE WIND WAS MOVING IN THEM, AND THE COMMOTION OF THEIR LADEN BRANCHES SOUNDED LIKE THE RIVER IN FULL SPATE. ONE IMPERSONATION OF MANY WHEN HE HAD FIRST COME TO THE JUNGLE. HE HAD BEEN AWED BY THE SHEER MULTIPLICITY OF BEAST AND BLOSSOM, THE RESTLESS PARADE OF LIFE. BUT HE HAD LEARNED BETTER. THIS BURGEONING DIVERSITY WAS A SHAM. THE JUNGLE PRETENDED ITSELF AN ARTLESS GARDEN. IT WAS NOT.



WHERE THE UNTUTORED TRESPASSER SAW ONLY A BRILLIANT SHOW OF NATURAL SPLENDORS, LOCKE NOW RECOGNISED A SUBTLE CONSPIRACY AT WORK, IN WHICH EACH THING MIMICRED SOME OTHER THING.



ROUND AND ROUND IN A DIZZING CIRCLE OF IMPERSONATIONS, A HALL OF MIRRORS WHICH CONFOUNDED THE SENSES AND WOULD, GIVEN TIME, ROT REASON ALTOGETHER.



LOCKET



LOCKE,
ARE YOU
AWAKE?

WHAT
DO YOU
WANT?

I CAN'T
SLEEP. I'VE BEEN
THINKING THE SUPPLY
PLANE COMES IN FROM
SANTAREN THE DAY AFTER
TOMORROW. WE COULD
BE BACK THERE IN A
FEW HOURS, OUT OF
ALL THIS.



I MEAN
PERMANENTLY...
ANNA.

PERMANENTLY?

I DON'T
BELIEVE IN CURSES.
DON'T THINK I DO.
BUT YOU SAW CHERRICK'S
BODY...WHAT HAPPENED
TO HIM.



THERE'S A
DISEASE--WHAT'S IT
CALLED? WHEN THE
BLOOD DOESN'T SET
PROPERLY?

HEMOPHILIA. HE
DIDN'T HAVE HEMOPHILIA
AND WE BOTH KNOW IT. I'VE
SEEN HIM CUT A MILLION
TIMES. HE MENDED LIKE
YOU OR I DO.

ALL
RIGHT. THEN
WHAT KILLED
HIM?



CONFESSIONAL
OVER, STUMPF
RETURNED TO
HIS BED.

IT WOULD SOON
BE LIGHT.
ANOTHER JUNGLE
DAWN.

HOW HE HATED
THE PLACE. AT
LEAST HE WOULDN'T
TOUCHED ANY OF
THE INDIANS!
HADN'T EVEN BEEN
WITHIN BREATHING
DISTANCE OF
THEM.

WHATEVER
THEY'D PASSED
ON TO CHERICK,
HE COULD
SURELY NOT BE
TAINTED. IN
LESS THAN
FORTY-EIGHT
HOURS HE WOULD
BE AWAY TO
SANTAREM, AND
THEN ON TO SOME
CITY, ANY CITY,
WHERE THE TRIBE
COULD NEVER
FOLLOW.

HE'D ALREADY
DONE HIS
PENANCE.
HADN'T HE?

STUMPF FRAMED,
AND SLIPPED,
BEFORE THE
MOMENTS BEGAN
TO CALL UP THE
DAY, INTO A
SPOILER'S SLEEP.



THEY HAD COME
INTO THE INDIAN
HAMLET AT NOON:
THE SUN A
BRILLIANT EYE.



IT WAS CHERRICK WHO FIRST
SPOTTED THE CHILD.



AT FIRST THEY
THOUGHT THE PLACE
DESERTED. LOCKE
AND CHERRICK HAD
ADVANCED INTO THE
COMPOUND, LEAVING
THE DISSENT-
RIDDEN STUMPF IN
THE JEEP.



IF THERE WAS A FLICKER OF FEELING ON THEIR FACES, LOCKE COULD NOT READ IT. THESE PEOPLE WERE IMPOSSIBLE TO DISGUISE; DECEIT WAS THEIR ONLY SKILL.



WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? THIS IS OUR LAND.



THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU.

GET THE HELL OUT HERE. LET HIM EXPLAIN IT TO THEM.

HE CAN'T MOVE.

GET HIM OUT HERE. I DON'T CARE IF HE'S SHAT HIS PANTS.



CHERRICK BASED AWAY, LEAVING LOCKE STANDING IN THE RING OF KUTS.



THERE WERE AT MOST TWO DOZEN INDIANS, DESCENDANTS OF THE GREAT PEOPLE THAT HAD ONCE ROAMED THE AMAZON BASIN IN THEIR TENS OF THOUSANDS.

NOW THOSE TRIBES WERE ALL BUT DECIMATED. THE FOREST IN WHICH THEY HAD PROSPERED FOR GENERATIONS WAS BEING LEVELLED AND BURNED; EIGHT-LANE HIGHWAYS WERE SPEEDING THROUGH THEIR HUNTING GROUNDS. ALL THEY HELD SACRED WAS BEING TRAMPLED AND TRESPASSED.

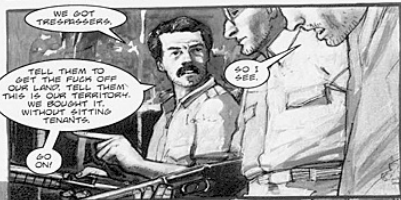


THEY WERE EXILES IN THEIR OWN LAND.

BUT STILL THEY DECLINED TO PAY HOMAGE TO THEIR NEW MASTERS, DESPITE THE RIFLES THEY BROUGHT.

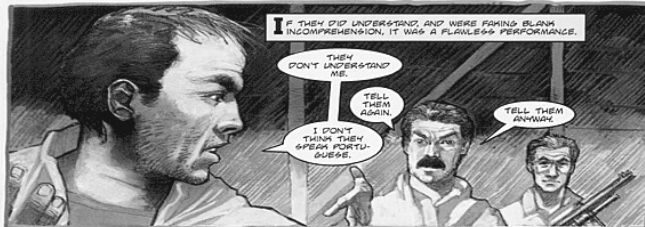
ONLY DEATH WOULD CONVINCE THEM OF DEFEAT, LOCKE MUSED.





S TUMPF TOOK SEVERAL SECONDS TO WORK OUT HIS PATTERN, THEN SPOKE A FEW VILTING WORDS IN BAD PORTUGUESE.





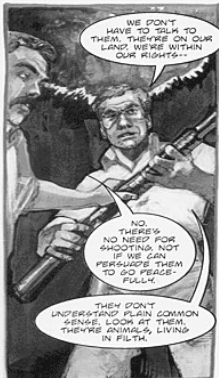
IF THEY DID UNDERSTAND, AND WERE FAKING BLANK INCOMPREHENSION, IT WAS A FLAWLESS PERFORMANCE.

THEY
DON'T UNDERSTAND
ME.

TELL
THEM
AGAIN.

I DON'T
THINK THEY
SPEAK PORTU-
GUESE.

TELL THEM
ANYWAY.



WE DON'T
HAVE TO TALK TO
THEM. THEY'RE ON OUR
LAND. WE'RE WITHIN
OUR RIGHTS...

NO.
THERE'S
NO NEED FOR
SHOOTING. NOT
IF WE CAN
PERSUADE THEM
TO GO PEACE-
FULLY.

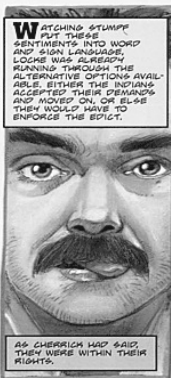
THEY DON'T
UNDERSTAND PLAIN COMMON
SENSE. LOOK AT THEM.
THEY'RE ANIMALS, LIVING
IN FILTH.



TELL THEM
WE'VE GOT WORK
TO DO HERE, THAT
WE'VE GOT
PAPERS.

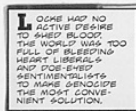
I DON'T
THINK THEY'D
BE MUCH
IMPRESSED.

JUST
TELL THEM
TO MOVE ON.
FIND SOME OTHER
PIECE OF LAND
TO SQUAT
ON.



WATCHING STUMPF PUT THESE SENTIMENTS INTO WORD AND SIGN LANGUAGE, LOCKE WAS ALREADY RUNNING THROUGH THE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS AVAILABLE. EITHER THE INDIANS ACCEPTED THEIR DEMANDS AND MOVED ON, OR ELSE THEY WOULD HAVE TO ENFORCE THE EDICT.

AS CHERIEKIC HAD SAID, THEY WERE WITHIN THEIR RIGHTS.



LOCKE HAD NO ACTIVE DESIRE TO SHED BLOOD. THE WORLD WAS TOO FULL OF BLEEPING HEART LIBERALS AND DOB-EYED SENTIMENTALISTS TO MAKE GENOCIDE THE MOST CONVENIENT SOLUTION.



BUT THE GUN HAD BEEN USED BEFORE, AND WOULD BE USED AGAIN, UNTIL EVERY UNWASHED INDIAN HAD PUT ON A PAIR OF TROUSERS AND GIVEN UP EATING MONKEYS.



INDEED, THE DIN OF LIBERALS NOTWITHSTANDING, THE GUN HAD ITS APPEAL. IT WAS SWIFT AND ABSOLUTE.

AT THE THOUGHT OF THESE SCARLET-FACED SAVAGES LAID LOW, LOCKE FELT HIS TRIGGER FINGER ITCH, PHYSICALLY ITCH.

STUMPF HAD FINISHED HIS ENCORE; IT HAD MET WITH NO RESPONSE.

BE MY GUEST.

I'M GOING TO BE SICK.

PLEASE, I HAVE TO LIE DOWN. I DON'T WANT THEM WATCHING ME.

LOCKE TOYED WITH THE STOCK OF HIS RIFLE AS HE SPOKE, RUNNING A BROKEN THUMB-NAIL ALONG THE NICKS IN IT. THERE WERE PERHAPS A DOZEN, EACH ONE A HUMAN GRAVE.

THE JUNGLE CONCEALED MURDER SO EASILY; IT ALMOST SEEMED, IN ITS CRYPTIC FASHION, TO CONDONE THE CRIME.

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THEIR APPEARANCE, ONE OF THE ASSEMBLY MOVED.

HE WAS AN ANCIENT; FULLY THIRTY YEARS OLDER THAN MOST OF THE TRIBE.

AND HE SPOKE...

WHAT EMERGED FROM HIS SCRAGGY THROAT WAS NOT A LANGUAGE MADE OF WORDS, BUT ONLY OF SOUND, A POTPOURRI OF JUNGLE NOISES. THERE WAS NO DISCERNIBLE PATTERN TO THE OUTPOURING; IT WAS SIMPLY A DISPLAY—AWESOME IN ITS WAY—OF IMPERSONATIONS.

THE MAN COULD MURMUR LIKE A JAGUAR, SCREECH LIKE A PARROT, HE COULD FIND IN HIS THROAT THE SLASH OF RAIN ON ORCHIDS, THE HOWL OF MONKEYS.

THE SOUNDS MADE STUMPF'S GORGE RISE.

THE JUNGLE HAD DISEASED HIM, DEHYDRATED HIM AND LEFT HIM WRUNG OUT. NOW THIS RHEUMY-EYED STICK-MAN WAS VOMITING THE WHOLE OPIOUS PLACE UP AT HIM.

WHAT'S
HE SAYING?

WHAT
DOES IT SOUND
LIKE? IT'S ALL
NOISES.

THE
FUCKER'S
CURSING
US!

THE OLD MAN'S SONG-
SPEECH LOWERED IN
PITCH. HE WAS SINGING
TWILIGHT, THAT BRIEF
AMBIGUITY BETWEEN THE
PIERCE DAY AND THE
SUFFOCATING NIGHT.

WHAT ARE
YOU SAYING? TALK
SENSE!

BUT THE NIGHT-NOISES
ONLY WHISPERED ON,
AN UNBROKEN STREAM.

THIS
IS OUR
VILLAGE.



OUR VILLAGE. OUR LAND.

YOU SPEAK ENGLISH.

SOME.

WHY DIDN'T YOU ANSWER ME EARLIER?



NOT MY PLACE TO SPEAK. HE IS THE ELDER.

THE CHIEF, YOU MEANT?

THE CHIEF IS DEAD. ALL HIS FAMILY IS DEAD. THIS IS THE WISDOM OF US...

THEN YOU TELL HIM--

NO NEED TO TELL. HE UNDERSTANDS YOU.

HE SPEAKS ENGLISH TOOT



NO. YOU ARE... TRANSPARENT.



TELL HIM ANWAY, TELL THEM ALL. THIS IS OUR LAND. WE BOUGHT IT.

THE TRIBE WAS ALWAYS LIVED HERE.

NOT ANY LONGER.

WE'VE GOT PAPERS... FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

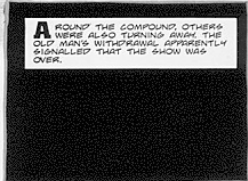
WE WERE HERE BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT.



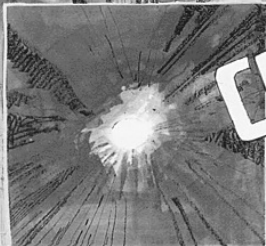
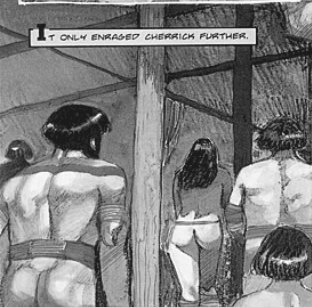
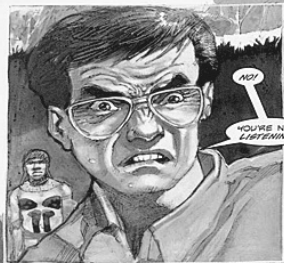
THEN, LIKE THE CLOSING OF A DEPARTING DAY, THE OLD MAN STOPPED TALKING THE FOREST.

CALL HIM BACK! MAKE HIM TELL THE REST THEY'VE GOT TO GO.

HEY!



AROUND THE COMPOUND, OTHERS WERE ALSO TURNING AWAY. THE OLD MAN'S WITHDRAWAL APPARENTLY SIGNALLLED THAT THE SHOW WAS OVER.



FROM WITHIN THE HUT CAME A TINY SHRIEK, NOT LIKE THE OLD MAN'S VOICE AT ALL.



A S THE SHRIEK SOUNDED, STUMPF FELL TO HIS KNEES, HIS GUT IN SPASM. HE DID NOT SEE THE DIMINUTIVE FIGURE EMERGE FROM THE HUT AND TOTTER INTO THE SUNLIGHT.



W HEN HE DID LOOK UP, AND SAW HOW THE CHILD WITH THE SCARLET FACE CLUTCHED HIS BELLY, STUMPF HOPED HIS EYES LIED.



BUT THEY DID NOT LIE.



S OMewhere AMONGST THE HUTS A WOMAN BEGAN TO SOB QUIETLY. FOR A MOMENT THE WORLD SPUN ON A PIN-HEAD, BALANCED EXQUISITELY BETWEEN SILENCE AND THE CRY THAT MUST BREAK IT, BETWEEN A TRUCE HELD AND THE COMING ATROCITY.



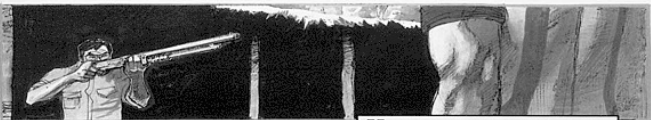


LOCKE AND STUMPF WERE ALREADY WITHIN TWENTY FEET OF THE JEEP, AND THERE WAS STILL NO MOVE FROM THE SAVAGES.

THEN, AS HE LOOKED BACK TOWARDS THE COMPOUND, IT SEEMED AS THOUGH THE TRIBE BREATHED TOGETHER ONE SOLID BREATH...



...AND HEARING THAT SOUND, CHERRICK FELT DEATH WEAVE ITSELF LIKE A FISH-BONE IN HIS THROAT, TOO DEEP TO BE PLUCKED OUT BY HIS FINGERS, TOO BIG TO BE SWAT.



HAD HE TOUCHED THE BOY? IF SO, IT HAD BEEN AN ASTONISHING SLEIGHT-OF-HAND, FOR CHERRICK HAD SEEN NOTHING.



TRICK OR NO TRICK, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISPLAY WAS PERFECTLY APPARENT: HE WAS BEING ACCUSED OF MURDER.



AS HE SPOKE HE SEEMED TO SEE A SHIFTING IN THE OLD MAN'S FEATURES.

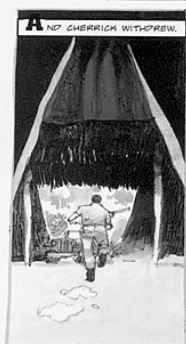
YOU DON'T FRIGHTEN ME, YOU UNDERSTAND? I'M NOT A FOOL.



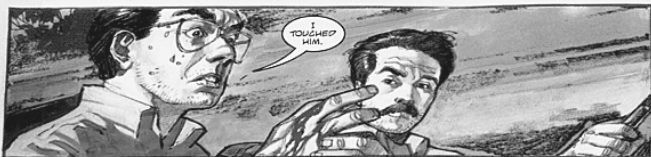
BENEATH THE CORRUPTION OF AGE, A HINT OF THE CHILD NOW DEAD AT THE HUT DOOR: THE TINY MOUTH EVEN SEEMED TO SMILE.



THEN, AS SUBTLY AS IT APPEARED, THE ILLUSION FADED.



AND CHERRICK WITHDREW.



THE TINY TRADING POST TO THE SOUTH OF AVERIO WAS SCANT OF CIVILISATION, BUT IT SURVIVED. THERE WERE WHITE FACES HERE, AND CLEAN WATER, STUMPS, WHOSE CONDITION HAD DETERIORATED ON THE RETURN JOURNEY, WAS TREATED BY CRUNCH, AN ENGLISHMAN WHO HAD THE MANNER OF A DISFRANCHISED BOAR AND A FACE LIKE A HAMMERED STEAK.



I'VE BEEN HERE YEARS. I KNOW THE WAY THESE PEOPLE THINK. THEY MAY ACT AS THOUGH THEY'RE STUPID... COWARDS EVEN, TAKE IT FROM ME. THEY'RE NEITHER.





THEY DIDN'T MOVE ON US EVEN THOUGH THEY OUTNUMBERED US TEN TO ONE. IF THAT ISN'T COURAGE, WHAT IS IT?

THIRTY YEARS AGO THIS WHOLE TERRITORY WAS THEIR HOMELAND. NOBODY WANTED IT. THEY WENT WHERE THEY LIKED, DID WHAT THEY LIKED, AS FAR AS THE WHITES WERE CONCERNED, THE JUNGLE WAS FILTHY AND DISEASE-INFECTED. WE WANTED NO PART OF IT.

WE PAID FOR THE LAND, IT'S ALL WE'VE GOT NOW.

PAID?

THE MONKEY CHATTERED, APPARENTLY AS AMUSED BY THIS CLAIM AS ITS MASTER.

NO, YOU JUST PAID FOR A BLIND EYE, SO YOU COULD TAKE IT BY FORCE. YOU PAID FOR THE RIGHT TO FUCK UP THE INDIANS IN ANY WAY YOU COULD. THAT'S WHAT YOUR DOLLARS BOUGHT, MISTER LOCKE. THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS COUNTRY IS COUNTING OFF THE MONTHS UNTIL EVERY TREE ON THE SUB-CONTINENT IS WIPE OUT BY YOU OR YOUR LIKE.

AND, OF COURSE, IN SOME WAYS WE WERE RIGHT. IT IS FILTHY AND DISEASE-INFECTED, BUT IT'S ALSO GOT RESERVES WE NOW WANT BULLY MINERALS, OIL MAYBE...POWER.

SO WHAT? YOU COME HERE, IF YOU'RE SO FUCKING CLEVER?

SAME REASON AS YOU.

WHAT REASON IS THAT?

GREED.

I THOUGHT I COULD MAKE MY FORTUNE OUT HERE, THE SAME WAY YOU DO. I GAVE MYSELF TWO YEARS, THREE AT THE MOST. THAT WAS THE BEST PART OF TWO DECADES AGO.

THE JUNGLE EATS YOU UP AND SPITS YOU OUT, SOONER OR LATER.

NOT ME.

EXTINCTION'S IN THE AIR, MISTER LOCKE. I CAN SMELL IT.

THEY WON'T COME HERE, WILL THEY? THEY WON'T FOLLOW US?

THE QUESTION, SPOKEN IN ONLY A WHISPER, BEGGED FOR A REPLY IN THE NEGATIVE.

TRY AS HE MIGHT, CHERICH COULD NOT DISCLOSE THE SIGNS OF THE PREVIOUS DAY.





DON'T FRET. SOMETIMES ONE OR TWO OF THEM WILL DRIFT IN HERE WITH A PARROT TO SELL, OR A FEW POTS, BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN THEM COME HERE IN ANY NUMBERS. THEY DON'T LIKE IT. THIS IS CIVILIZATION AS FAR AS THEY'RE CONCERNED, AND IT INTIMIDATES THEM. BESIDES, THEY WOULDN'T HARM MY GUESTS. THEY NEED ME.

NEED YOU?

THEY USE OUR MEDICINES, PANCA SUPPLIES THEM. AND BLANKETS, ONCE IN A WHILE, AS I SAID, THEY'RE NOT STUPID.

YOUR FRIEND'S GONE BAD.

NO FRIEND.

NEXT DOOR STUMPF HAD BEGUN TO HOWL. PANCA'S CONSOLING VOICE COULD BE HEARD, ATTEMPTING TO TALK DOWN THE PANIC. HE WAS PLAINLY FAILING.



IT ROTS.

WHAT DOES?

THE SOUL. IT'S LIKE FRUIT, YOU SEE. IT ROTS.

S STUMPF'S CRIES GAVE FORCE TO THE OBSERVATION. IT WAS NOT THE VOICE OF A WHOLESOME CREATURE; THERE WAS PUTRESCENCE IN IT.



WHAT DO THEY GIVE YOU FOR THE MEDICINES AND BLANKETS? WOMEN?

I'VE NO USE FOR WOMEN. I'VE HAD THE SHAP FOR TOO MANY YEARS. THE SOUL—ISN'T THE ONLY THING THAT ROTS.

WELL, WHAT DO YOU GET FROM THEM THEN? FOR YOUR SUPPLIES?



THE WORD HAD A SEDUCTIVE RING; IT SOUNDED LIKE LIFE TO HIM.

EXTINCT?

ARTIFACTS, BOWLS, JUGS, MATS. EVERYBODY WANTS SOMETHING MADE BY AN EXTINCT TRIBE THESE DAYS. *MENTO MENT.*

OH, CERTAINLY. THEY'RE AS GOOD AS GONE. IF YOU DON'T WIFE THEM OUT, THEY'LL DO IT THEMSELVES.

SUICIDE?

IN THEIR FASHION, A TRIBE LOSES ITS LAND AND ITS APPETITE FOR LIFE GOES WITH IT. THE WOMEN DON'T GET PREGNANT ANYMORE; THE YOUNG MEN TAKE TO DRINK, THE OLD MEN JUST STARVE THEMSELVES TO DEATH. IN A YEAR OR TWO IT'S LIKE THEY NEVER EXISTED.

LOCKS SILENTLY SALUTED THE FATAL WISDOM OF THESE PEOPLE. THEY KNEW WHEN TO DIE, WHICH WAS MORE THAN COULD BE SAID FOR SOME HED MET. THE THOUGHT OF THEIR DEATH-WISH ABSOLVED HIM OF ANY LAST VESTIGES OF GUILT.

WHAT WAS THE GUN IN HIS HAND, EXCEPT AN INSTRUMENT OF EVOLUTION?

ON THE FOURTH DAY OF THEIR ARRIVAL AT THE POST, STUMPF'S FEVER ABATED, MUCH TO DINGY'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE WORST OF IT'S OVER. GIVE HIM TWO MORE DAYS REST AND YOU CAN HEAD BACK TO YOUR LABORS.

TIME TO GET OURSELVES SOME HELP AND GO BACK IN THERE.

BUT NO MORE GUNS.

CHERRICK HADN'T TOUCHED HIS RIFLE SINCE THEY'D ARRIVED AT THE POST: IN FACT, HE KEPT FROM CONTACT WITH ANYTHING BUT A BOTTLE AND HIS BED.

HIS SKIN SEEMED TO CRAWL AND CREEP PERPETUALLY.

NO NEED FOR GUNS.

IF YOU MEAN WAITING FOR THEM TO DIE OUT NATURALLY, I'M NOT THAT PATIENT.

NO, WE CAN BE SWIFTER THAN THAT.

HOW?

THEY'RE MY LIVELIHOOD, OR PART OF IT. YOU'RE ASKING ME TO HELP YOU MAKE MYSELF BANKRUPT.

WHAT'S IT WORTH? YOUR WISDOM?

A CUT OF WHATEVER YOU FIND ON YOUR LAND.

ALL RIGHT, TETELMAN, TALK.

THEY NEED MEDICINES BECAUSE THEY'RE SO SUSCEPTIBLE TO OUR DISEASES. A DECENT PLASMA CAN WIPE THEM OUT PRACTICALLY OVERNIGHT.

ONE FELL SWOOP, THEY'VE GOT PRACTICALLY NO DEFENCES AGAINST CERTAIN BACTERIA. NEVER HAD TO BUILD UP ANY RESISTANCE.

THE CLAP, SMALLPOX, EVEN MEASLES.

HOW?

I ASKED HOW?

BLANKETS.

DEAD MEN'S BLANKETS.

A LITTLE BEFORE DAWN OF THE NIGHT OF STUMPF'S RECOVERY, CHERRICH WOKE SUDDENLY, STARTLED FROM HIS REST BY BAD DREAMS.

IT WAS THE WORDS HE DREAMT. WORDS COMING FROM THE OLD MAN'S TOOTHLESS MOUTH WHICH BROUGHT ON THE COLD SWEATS THAT ENGASED HIS BODY.

AND SUDDENLY THE BLOODY HANDS WERE THERE, SUSPENDED IN THE PITCH.

THERE WAS NO FACE, NO SKIN, NO TRIBE, JUST THE HANDS.

BUT HE KNEW BETTER.

AND NOW, THE VOICE. HERE WERE THE WORDS HE HAD DREAMT SPOKEN. HE LAY LIKE A NEW-BORN, LISTENING TO ITS PARENTS TALK BUT UNABLE TO MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANCE OF THEIR EXCHANGES.

WHAT WERE THE WORDS? HE COULDN'T RECALL THEM NOW.

D... DREAMING.

HE WAS LACONIC, WAGNT MET HE TASTED THE SOURNESS OF HIS STUPIDITY FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE CHILDHOOD.

HE STRUGGLED, WISHING HE COULD STOP THE VOICE AND ASK FOR EXPLANATION.

BUT IT WAS ALREADY FADING.

THE VOICE MADE HIM FEARFUL OF AMBIGUITIES HE HAD RIPPEN ROUGHENED OVER, OF WHISPERS HIS SHOUTING LIFE HAD RENDERED INAUDIBLE.

HE FUMBLER FOR COMPREHENSION, AND WAS NOT ENTIRELY FRUSTRATED. THE MAN WAS SPEAKING OF THE WORLD, AND OF EXILE FROM THE WORLD, OF BEING BROKEN ALWAYS BY WHAT ONE SEEMS TO POSSESS.

HANDS AND VOICE HAD GONE, AND WITH THEM ALL BUT AN IRRITATING MURMUR OF WHAT HE HAD ALMOST UNDERSTOOD.



HIS BACK AND BUTTOCKS, AND THE UNDER-SIDE OF HIS THIGHS, FELT SORE.

THERE WAS AGAIN THE ITCH OF TENDERNESS COMING TO THE POST. HE WANTED TO BE AWAY FROM THIS PLACE, AND BADLY.

THERE WAS A CUT IN THE CUSHION OF HIS THUMB, WHERE THE MOSQUITO NET HAD NICKED HIS FLESH.

THE CLOTHES HE PUT ON WERE A SCOURGE TO HIS BACK. HE SEEMED TO FEEL EVERY THREAD CHAFING HIS NERVE ENDINGS.



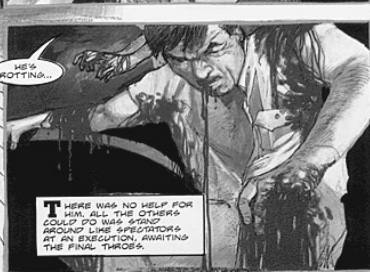
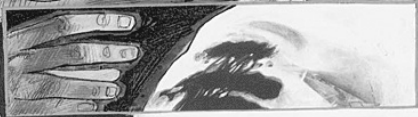
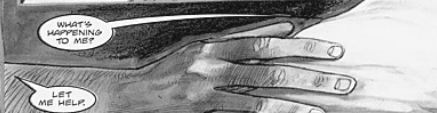
HIS FELT STRANGE. THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THIS DRAWING ROOM WHICH MADE HIM PROFOUNDLY UNEASY. HE KNEW THE DANGERS OF COURTING UNFOUNDED FEARS, AND HE TRIED TO FORBID THEM, BUT THEY WERE INCONTESTABLE.



IT WASN'T THE BLOOD OF THE INSECT, BUT HIS OWN.





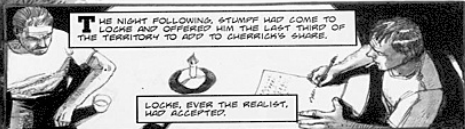




HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THE DEAD MAN HAD SAID, BUT WHAT DID IT MATTER? LOCKE WOULD HAVE THE LAND ANYWAY, WOULDN'T HE?



THEY HAD BURIED HIM TOWARDS EVENING. THE CORPSE HAD BEGUN TO PUTREFY BY THE TIME IT WAS SEWN UP IN CANVAS FOR THE BURIAL.



THE NIGHT FOLLOWING, STUMPF HAD COME TO LOCKE AND OFFERED HIM THE LAST THIRD OF THE TERRITORY TO ADD TO CHERRICK'S SHARE.

LOCKE, EVER THE REALIST, HAD ACCEPTED.

THE EVENING OF THE NEXT DAY, AS STUMPF HAD HOPED, THE SUPPLY PLANE CAME IN.



LOCKE ELECTED TO FLY BACK TO SANTAREM TO BUY UP FRESH SUPPLIES AND, IF POSSIBLE, HIRE A RELIABLE DRIVER AND GUNMAN.

AT SANTAREM, THEY PARTED WITH A SINGLE HANDSHAKE WHICH LEFT EVERY NERVE IN STUMPF'S HAND SCOURGED...



...AN OPEN CUT IN THE TENDER FLESH BETWEEN HIS INDEX FINGER AND THUMB

SANTAREM WASN'T RIO, LOCKE MUSED, AS HE MADE HIS WAY DOWN TO A BAR AT THE SOUTH END OF TOWN, IN SEARCH OF THE KIND OF LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT OF WHICH HE NEVER TIRED.

THE WOMEN OF SANTAREM WERE AS UNPALATABLE AS THE BEER, BUT LOCKE HAD NO EYE FOR BEAUTY IN THE OPPOSITE SEX; HIS PLEASURE WAS IN SEEING JUST WHAT A WOMAN WOULD DO FOR A FEW GRUBBY DOLLAR BILLS.



HE HAD FINALLY FOUND ONE WHO--ONCE DRUNKENNESS HAD PERSUADED HER TO ABANDON WHAT LITTLE HOPE OF DIGNITY SHE HAD--WAS WILLING TO ACCEDE TO A PARTICULAR PECCADILLO...



FUCK.

\$1.
FOOK,
FOOK.



WHO
IS IT?

MENAGEME,
BENHOR LOCKE,
URGENTE,
URGENTE.

MENSAGEM.
SENHOR LOCKE. HOSPITAL
SACRADO CORAÇÃO DE
MARIA.

IT COULD ONLY BE STUMPF,
LOCKE THOUGHT, WHO ELSE
DID HE KNOW IN THIS CORNER
OF HELL WHO'D CALL UPON HIM?

VEN
COMIGO. VEN COMIGO.
URGENTE.

THE HOSPITAL SACRADO
CORAÇÃO DE MARIA WAS
NO PLACE TO FALL ILL! BETTER,
THOUGHT LOCKE, TO DIE IN
YOUR OWN BED WITH YOUR OWN
SWEAT FOR COMPANY.

HERE,
YOUR FRIEND,
HE'S HURT HIS EYE,
AND HE HAS SOME
MINOR ABRASIONS ON
HIS HANDS AND FACE,
BUT HE WON'T HAVE
ANYONE GO
NEAR HIM.

JUST
PAYING FOR THE
CLEAN ROOM AND
DOCTORS
HIMSELF.

HE HAS
DELUSIONS. TELL
HIM HE PAY MORE OR
TOMORROW HE
LEAVE.

NO, I'M NOT
COMING. NOT NOW.
YOU UNDERSTAND
LATER, LATER.

TA
MORRENDO.

D'YING? WELL,
LET HIM UNDERSTAND
MET YOU GO BACK AND
TELL HIM I WON'T
COME UNTIL I'M
READY.

E MEU
DINHEIRO?

YOU GO
TO HELL.

WHEN, TWO HOURS AND
ONE UNSAINLY ACT OF
FASHIONLESS SEX LATER,
LOCKE UNLOCKED THE DOOR,
HE DISCOVERED THAT THE
CHILD, BY WAY OF REVENGE,
HAD DEFEATED ON THE
THRESHOLD.

LOCKE WAS LOOKING AT THE
MAN FOR A GOOD TIME
BEFORE STUMPF SENSED THAT
HE WAS WATCHED. HE LOOKED
UP SLOWLY.

EVERYTHING
IS TRUE, LOCKE.
EVERYTHING.

WHAT
THE HELL ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

TETELMAN
TOLD ME—CHERRICK'S
BABBLING ABOUT BEING
EXILES...THE ELFER FROM
THE VILLAGE. HE WAS HERE,
STANDING WHERE YOU'RE
STANDING, LOOKING
AT ME THROUGH
THE GLASS.

HIS GOOD EYE, AS IF IN
COMPENSATION FOR THE LOSS
OF ITS COMPANION, SEEMED
TO HAVE SWELLED TO TWICE
ITS NATURAL SIZE. IT HELPED
ENOUGH FEAR FOR BOTH IT
AND ITS TWIN: NEED ENOUGH
FOR A DOZEN EYES.

IT HAPPENED TO CHERRICK, AND NOW IT'S HAPPENING TO ME. NONE OF US'LL ESCAPE, NOT UNLESS WE MAKE AMENDS.

LOOK, YOU'VE GOT TO VAGATE THE ROOM. I'VE BEEN GOT TO GET OUT BY MORNING.

NO, I CAN'T LEAVE. I CAN'T LEAVE.

THE DUST IN THE AIR, IT'LL CUT ME UP. I GOT A SPECK IN MY EYE--JUST A SPECK--AND THE NEXT THING MY EYE'LL BE BLEEDING AS THOUGH IT'LL NEVER STOP. I CAN'T HARDLY LIE DOWN. THE SHEET'LL LIKE A BED OF NAILS. YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME.

HOW?

PAY THEM FOR THE ROOM. PAY THEM SO I CAN STAY 'TIL YOU GET A SPECIALIST FROM SAO LUIS. THEN GO BACK TO THE VILLAGE, LOCHE. GO BACK AND TELL THEM. I DON'T WANT THE LAND. TELL THEM I DON'T OWN IT ANY LONGER.

HE'S HERE.

MY GOD.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

I'LL GO BACK, BUT IN MY OWN GOOD TIME.

TELL THEM TO LET ME BE, PLEASE.

THERE'S NOTHING THERE.

SEE?

WHAT ARE YOU PLAYING AT? YOU HAVEN'T GOT CHERRICK'S DISEASE. YOU CAN'T HAVE. YOU DIDN'T TOUCH THEM. WE AGREE! DAMN YOU, CHERRICK TOUCHED THEM-- WE FIGHT.

WE WERE WRONG.

THIS ISN'T SOMETHING YOU CAN BEAT INTO SUBMISSION, LOCHE. IT'S OUT OF OUR HANDS.

SEE?

S TUMPF'S SUDDEN, FATALISTIC CALM FRIGHTENED LOCKE.

THE ROOM WAS LOCKED. THE KEY WAS ON THE INSIDE, WHERE STUMPF HAD HID FOR IT TO BE.

KEEP OUT, KEEP AWAY FROM ME.



SOMEWHERE NEARBY A WOMAN BEGAN TO YELL. NO MATTER! LOCKE WOULD HAVE HIS HANDS ON THE GERMAN BEFORE HELP COULD COME...

...AND THEN, BY CHRIST, HE'D WIFE EVERY LAST VESTIGE OF A SMILE FROM THE EASTERN'S LIFE.

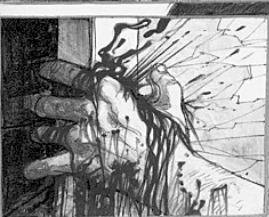
IN THE ANTISEPTIC COCOON OF HIS ROOM, STUMPF FELT THE FIRST BLAST OF UNCLEAN AIR FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD. IT WAS NO MORE THEN A LIGHT BREEZE THAT INVADIED HIS MAKESHIFT SANCTUARY, BUT IT BORE UPON ITS BACK THE DEBRIS OF THE WORLD.

SOOT AND SEEDS, FLAKES OF SKIN ITCHED OFF A THOUSAND SCALPS, FLUFF AND SAND AND TWIST OF HAIR, THE BRIGHT DUST FROM A MOTHS WING.

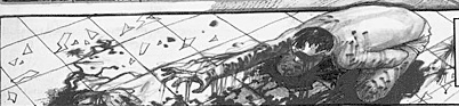
NOTES SO SMALL THE HUMAN EYE ONLY GLIMPSED THEM IN A SHAFT OF WHITE SUNLIGHT, EACH A TINY, WHIRLING SPECK QUITE HARMLESS TO MOST LIVING ORGANISMS.

AAHIEEEE!

BUT THIS CLOUD WAS LETHAL TO STUMPF; IN SECONDS HIS BODY BECAME A FIELD OF TINY, SEEPING WOUNDS.



LOCKE, REALIZING THAT STUMPF WAS FIRST RECENTING HIS LAUGHTER, LET THE MAN GO.



THE KILLING AIR STILL SUCCED HIM AS HE SANK DOWN, WITH EACH AGONIZED SHUDDER HE WOKE IN THE AIR NEW BODIES AND WHIRLPOOLS TO OPEN HIM UP.



THERE WAS NOBODY LOCKE KNEW AT TETELMAN'S STORE. THE HIRSD HANDS WERE DRUNK, THEIR MASTERS HAVING GONE OFF INTO THE JUNGLE THE PREVIOUS DAY.



AFTER ALL, IT HADN'T BEEN *HE* WHO FIRED THE KILLING SHOT. HE HAD NOT HARMED THE PEOPLE IN ANY WAY.



LOCKE PERSUADED THE MOST SOBER OF THE MEN TO ACCOMPANY HIM BACK TO THE VILLAGE AS TRANSLATOR.

HE HAD NO REAL IDEA OF HOW HE WOULD MAKE HIS PEACE WITH THE TRIBE. HE WAS ONLY CERTAIN THAT HE HAD TO ARGUE HIS INNOCENCE.



IF THEY SHOULD REQUIRE SOME PENANCE OF HIM, HE WAS NOT ABOVE ACCEDING TO THEIR DEMANDS. HE HAD SEEN SO MUCH SUFFERING OF LATE. HE WANTED TO BE CLEANSED OF IT.

ANYTHING THEY ASKED, WITHIN REASON, HE WOULD COMPLY WITH. ANYTHING TO AVOID DYING LIKE THE OTHERS, HE'D EVEN GIVE BACK THE LAND.



WHERE ARE YOU?

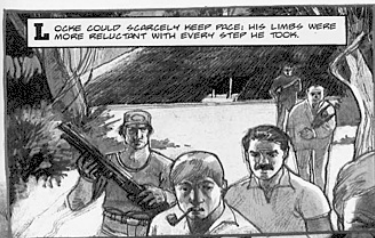
MY GOD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

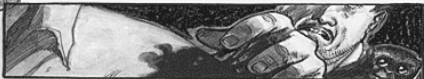
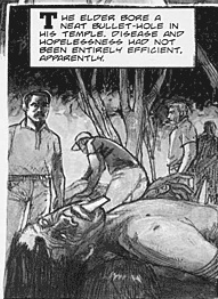
I MIGHT ASK YOU THE SAME QUESTION.



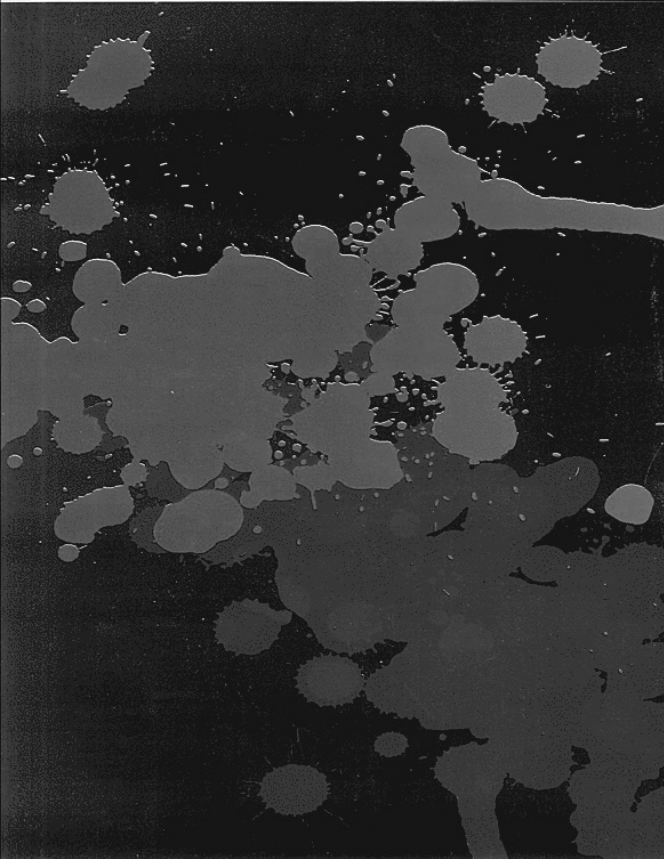
MISTER LOCKE, IT IS GOOD WE MEET.

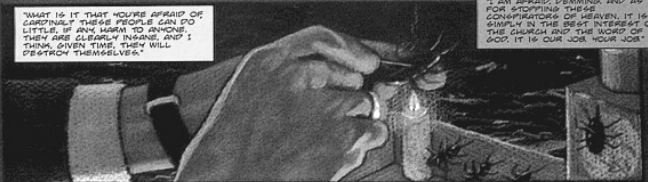












"WHAT IS IT THAT YOU'RE AFRAID OF, CARDINAL? THESE PEOPLE CAN DO LITTLE, IF ANY, HARM TO ANYONE. THEY ARE CLEARLY INSANE, AND I THINK, GIVEN TIME, THEY WILL DESTROY THEMSELVES."

"I AM AFRAID, DEMMING, AND AS FOR STOPPING THESE CONSPIRATORS OF HEAVEN, IT IS SIMPLY IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CHURCH AND THE WORD OF GOD. IT IS OUR JOB, YOUR JOB."



"YOU THINK GREGORIO SUCCEEDED, IS THAT IT?"

"YOUR QUESTIONS ARE BECOMING TIRING, DEMMING. I WANT YOU TO ASSEMBLE THE FATHERS AND SEND THEM ON THEIR WAY. I WANT PICKERSON FOUND AND BROUGHT BACK TO ME... I WANT THIS UNSCOPOL CHAPTER CLOSED ONCE AND FOR ALL."



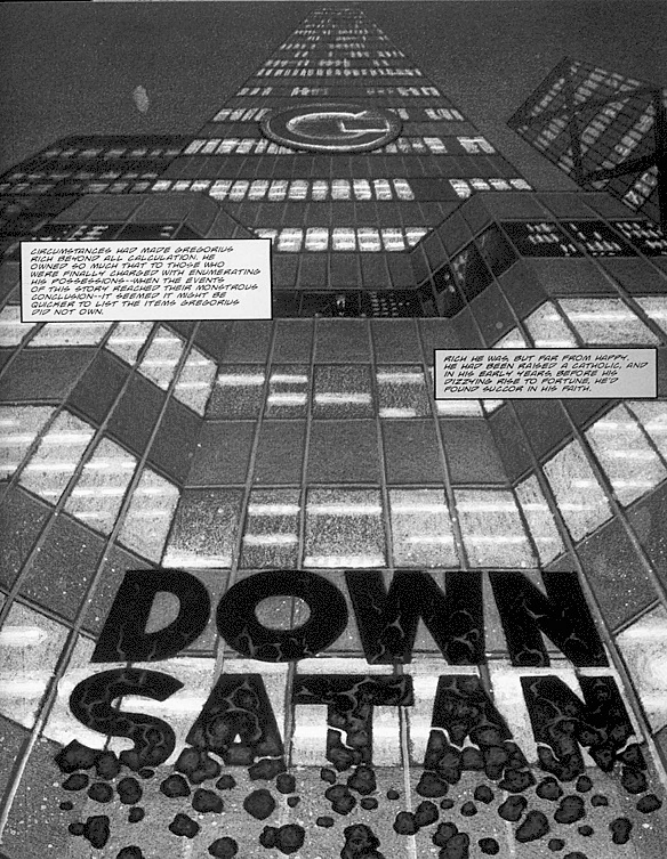
"YES, SIR."





WARREN
DICHERSON, IN THE
NAME OF GOD THE FATHER
YOU ARE UNDER
ARREST.





CIRCUMSTANCES HAD MADE GREGORIUS RICH BEYOND ALL CALCULATION. HE OWNED SO MUCH THAT TO THOSE WHO WERE FINALLY CHARGED WITH ENUMERATING HIS POSSESSIONS—WHEN THE EVENTS OF THIS STORY REACHED THEIR MONSTROUS CONCLUSION—IT SEEMED IT MIGHT BE GREATER TO LIST THE ITEMS GREGORIUS DID NOT OWN.

RICH HE WAS, BUT FAR FROM HAPPY. HE HAD BEEN RAISED A CATHOLIC, AND IN HIS EARLY YEARS, BEFORE HIS DIZZING RISE TO FORTUNE, HE'D FOUND SUCCOR IN HIS FAITH.

**DOWN
SATAN**

BUT HE'D NEGLECTED IT, AND IT WAS ONLY AT THE AGE OF FIFTY-FIVE, WITH THE WORLD AT HIS FEET, THAT HE WORE ONE NIGHT AND FOUND HIMSELF GODLESS.

IT WAS A BITTER BLOW, BUT HE IMMEDIATELY TOOK STEPS TO MAKE GOOD HIS LOSS. HE WENT TO ROME AND SPOKE WITH THE SUPREME PONTIFF. HE PRAYED NIGHT AND DAY. HE FOUNDED SEMINARIES AND LATER COLONIES. BUT, HOWEVER, DECLINED TO SHOW SO MUCH AS HIS TOENAIL. GREGORY, IT SEEMED, WAS FORGOTTEN.

IF YOU WILL LET ME, SIR, I THINK I CAN BE OF SOME HELP.

WHAT DO YOU WANT, PICKERSON?

WELL?

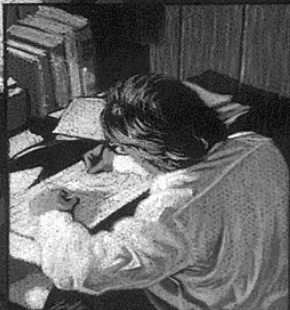


HIS RESEARCHES SOON PROVED THAT ALL THE TRADITIONAL METHODS OF SUMMONING THE LORD OF VERNON--THE DEVILING OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, THE SACRIFICING OF BABES--WERE NO MORE EFFECTIVE THAN HIS GOOD WORKS HAD BEEN AT PROVOKING YAHWEH.





IT WAS ONLY AFTER A YEAR OF
DELIBERATION THAT HE FINALLY
FELL UPON HIS MASTER PLAN.



HE WOULD ARRANGE TO HAVE BUILT
A HELL ON EARTH, A MODERN INFERNO
SO MONSTROUS THAT THE TEMPTER
WOULD BE TEMPTED, AND COME TO
ROOST THERE LIKE A CUCADO IN AN
UNLAPED NEST.



HE SEARCHED HIGH AND LOW FOR AN ARCHITECT AND FOUND, LINGERING IN A MADHOUSE OUTSIDE FLORENCE, A MAN CALLED LEONARDO, WHOSE FLAIR FOR MUSSOLINI'S PLACES HAD A LUNATIC GRANDEUR THAT SUITED GREGORIUS' PROJECT PERFECTLY.



LEONARDO WAS TAKEN FROM HIS CELL-- A FETTERED OLD MAN--AND GIVEN HIS DREAMS AGAIN. HIS GENIUS FOR THE PRODIGIOUS HAD NOT DESERTED HIM.



IN ORDER TO FUEL HIS INVENTIONS, THE GREAT LIBRARIES OF THE WORLD WERE SCOURED FOR DESCRIPTIONS OF HELLS BOTH SECULAR AND METAPHYSICAL.

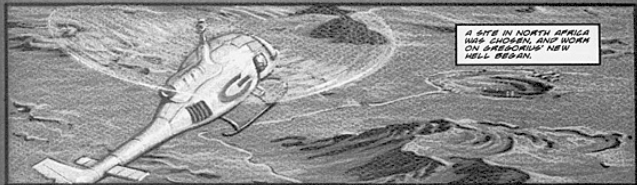


MUSEUM WALLS WERE HANGARDED FOR FORBIDDEN IMAGES OF MARTYRDOM.

NO STONE WAS LEFT UNTURNED IF IT WAS SUSPECTED SOMETHING FEVERISH WAS CONCEALED BENEATH.



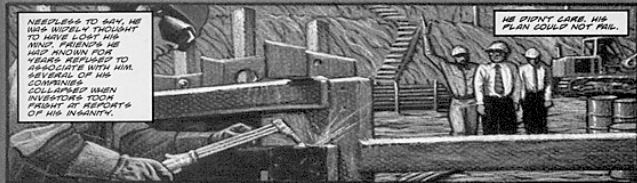
THE FINISHED DESIGNS OWED SOMETHING TO DE GARDI AND TO DANTE, AND SOMETHING MORE TO FREUD AND KRAFFT-EBING, BUT THERE WAS ALSO MUCH THERE THAT NO MIND HAD CONCEIVED OF BEFORE, OR AT LEAST EVER DARED TO PUT ON PAPER.



A SITE IN NORTH AFRICA
WAS CHOSEN, AND WORK
ON GREGORIUS' NEW
HELL BEGAN.

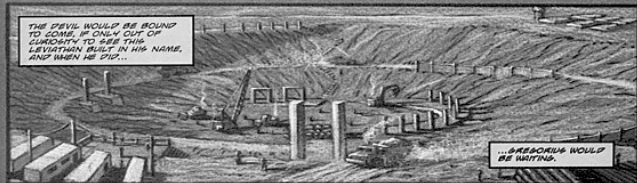


EVERYTHING ABOUT THE PROJECT BROKE
THE RECORDS. ITS FOUNDATIONS WERE
WATER, ITS WALLS THICKER, ITS PLUMBING
MORE ELABORATE THAN ANY EDIFICE HITHERTO
ATTEMPTED. GREGORIUS WATCHED ITS SLOW
CONSTRUCTION WITH AN ENTHUSIASM HE HAD
NOT TASTED SINCE HIS FIRST YEARS AS
AN EMPIRE BUILDER.



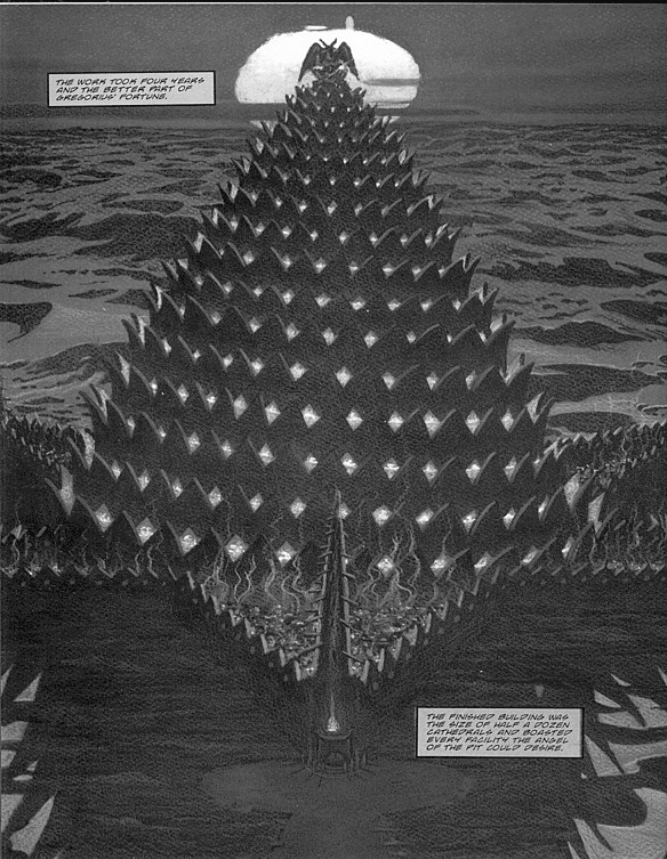
NEEDLESS TO SAY, HE
WAS WISELY THOUGHT
TO HAVE LOST HIS
MIND. FRIENDS HE
HAD KNOWN FOR
YEARS REFUSED TO
ASSOCIATE WITH HIM.
SEVERAL OF HIS
COMPANIES
COLLAPSED WHEN
INVESTORS TOOK
FRIGHT AT REPORTS
OF HIS INFINITY.

HE DIDN'T CARE. HIS
PLAN COULD NOT FAIL.



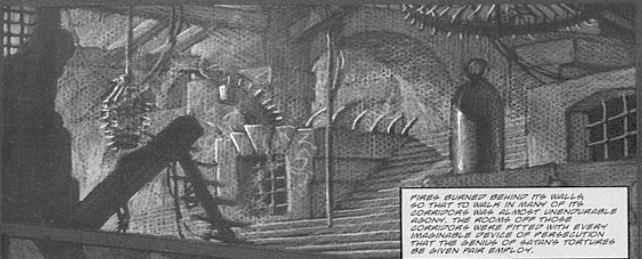
THE DEVIL WOULD BE BOUND
TO COME, IF ONLY OUT OF
CURIOSITY TO SEE THIS
LEVIATHAN BUILT IN HIS NAME,
AND WHEN HE DID...

...GREGORIUS WOULD
BE WAITING.



THE WORK TOOK FOUR YEARS
AND THE BETTER PART OF
GREGORUS' FORTUNE.

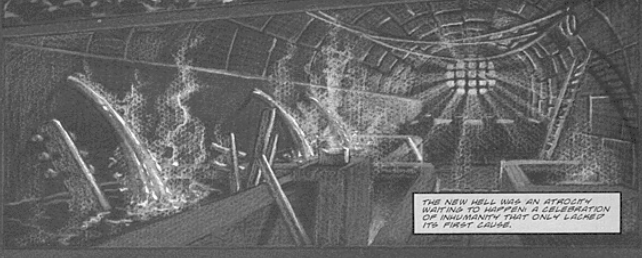
THE FINISHED BUILDING WAS
THE SIZE OF HALF A DOZEN
CATHEDRALS AND BOASTED
EVERY FACILITY THE ANGEL
OF THE PIT COULD DESIRE.



FIRE BURNED BEHIND ITS WALLS
SO THAT TO WALK IN MANY OF ITS
CORRIDORS WAS ALMOST UNENDURABLE
ALONE. THE ROOMS OFF THOSE
CORRIDORS WERE FITTED WITH EVERY
IMAGINABLE DEVICE OF PERSECUTION
THAT THE GENIUS OF SATAN'S TORTURES
BE GIVEN FOR EMPLOY.

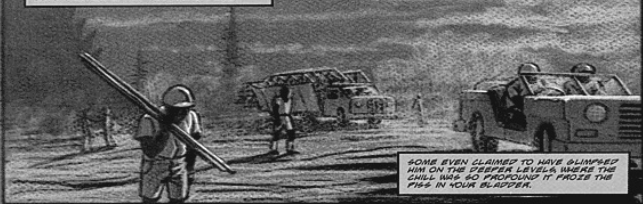


THERE WERE OVENS LARGE
ENOUGH TO CASIMATE FAMILIES.
POOLS DEEP ENOUGH TO
DROWN GENERATIONS.



THE NEW HELL WAS AN ATROCITY
WAITING TO HAPPEN: A CELEBRATION
OF INHUMANITY THAT ONLY LACKED
ITS FIRST CAUSE.

THE BUILDERS WITHDREW, AND THANKFULLY, IT WAS RUMORED AMONG THEM THAT SATAN HAD LONG BEEN WATCHING OVER THE CONSTRUCTION OF HIS PLEASURE DOME.



SOME EVEN CLAIMED TO HAVE GLIMPSED HIM ON THE DEEPER LEVELS, WHERE THE CHILL WAS SO PROFOUND IT PAID THE PEE IN YOUR BLADDER.

THERE WAS SOME EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL PRESENCE CONVERGING ON THE BUILDING AS IT NEARED COMPLETION...

...NOT THE LEAST THE CLEVEL DEATH OF LEONARDO, WHO HAD EITHER THROWN HIMSELF OR--THE SUPERSTITIOUS ARGUED--BEEN PITCHED THROUGH HIS SIXTH-STORY HOTEL WINDOW.



HE WAS BURIED WITH DUE EXTRAVAGANCE.



DICKERSON TOO HAD SEEMINGLY MET A STRANGE FATE, WHEN JUST DAYS BEFORE THE HELL'S COMPLETION, HE WENT MISSING WITHOUT WORD TO GREGORIO.



IT WAS SPECULATED THAT HE HAD LOST HIS WAY AMONG THE LABYRINTHINE CEMETERIES OR, PERHAPS, FALLEN INTO A VAT OF URINE AND DROWNED. NO MATTER--HIS WORK WAS DONE.



SO NOW, ALONE IN
JAIL, GREGORIOUS
WAITED.

HE DID NOT HAVE
TO WAIT LONG.

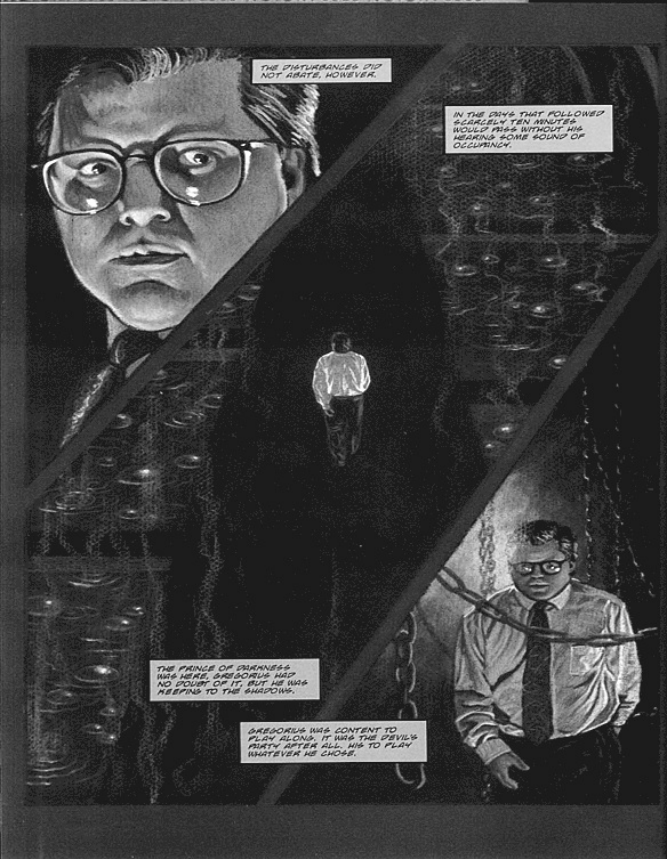
HE HAD BEEN THERE
A DAY, NO MORE,
WHEN HE HEARD NOISES
FROM THE LOWER
DEPTH.

ANTICIPATION BRIMMING,
HE WENT IN SEARCH OF
THE NOISES' SOURCE, BUT
FOUND ONLY THE ROLLING
OF EXCREMENT BATHS AND
THE RATTLING OF OVENS.

HE RETURNED TO HIS
SUITE OF CHAMBERS
ON THE NINTH LEVEL
AND WAITED.



THE NOISES CAME AGAIN.
AGAIN HE WENT IN SEARCH
OF THEIR SOURCE: AGAIN
HE CAME AWAY
DISAPPOINTED.



THE DISTURBANCES DID NOT ABATE, HOWEVER.

IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED SCARCELY TEN MINUTES WOULD PASS WITHOUT HIS HEARING SOME SOUND OF OCCUPANCY.

THE FRINGE OF DARKNESS WAS HERE, GREGORIUS HAD NO DOUBT OF IT, BUT HE WAS HEEDING TO THE SHADOWS.

GREGORIUS WAS CONTENT TO PLAY ALONG. IT WAS THE DEVIL'S PARTY AFTER ALL. HIS TO PLAY WHATEVER HE CHOSE.

BUT DURING THE LONG AND OFTEN LONELY MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED, GREGORIUS HEARD OF THE NOISE AND BEEN AND BEGAN TO DEMAND THAT SATAN SHOW HIMSELF.

THEREAFTER HE WENT ABOUT HIS SEARCHES STEALTHILY, HOPING TO CATCH HIS TENANT UNAWARE.

I KNOW YOU'RE HERE!
COME FORWARD,
DEVIL! YOU!

HIS VOICE RANG UNANSWERED DOWN THE DESERTED CORRIDORS, HOWEVER, UNTIL HIS THROAT WAS BRUISED WITH SHOUTING.

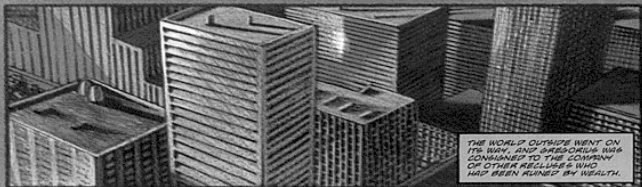
BUT THE APOSTATE ANGEL ALWAYS FLITTED AWAY BEFORE GREGORIUS COULD STEP WITHIN SIGHT OF HIM.

THE DEVIL HAD COME, HADN'T HE?

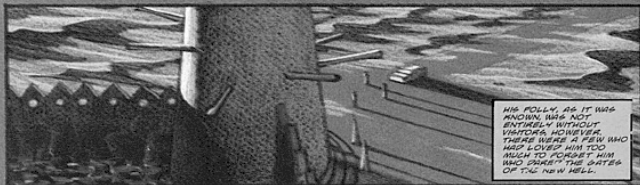
THEY WOULD PLAY THE WAITING GAME, IT SEEMED, HE AND SATAN, CHASING EACH OTHER'S TAIL THROUGH ICE AND FIRE AND FIRE AND ICE AGAIN. GREGORIUS TOLD HIMSELF TO BE PATIENT.

WASN'T THAT HIS FINGERPRINT ON THE DOOR HANDLE? THE TREAD ON THE STAIRS?

SOONER OR LATER THE FIEND WOULD SHOW HIS FACE, AND GREGORIUS WOULD SPIT ON IT.



THE WORLD OUTSIDE WENT ON ITS WAY, AND GREGORUS WAS CONSIDERED TO THE COMPANY OF OTHER RECLUSES WHO HAD BEEN RUINED BY WEALTH.



HIS FOLLY, AS IT WAS KNOWN, WAS NOT ENTIRELY WITHOUT VISITORS, HOWEVER. THERE WERE A FEW WHO HAD LOVED HIM TOO MUCH TO FORGET HIM WHO OPENED THE GATES OF THE NEW HELL.



THESE VISITORS MADE THE JOURNEY WITHOUT ANNOUNCING THEIR INTENTIONS, FEELING THE DISAPPROVAL OF THEIR FRIENDS.



THE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THEIR SUBSEQUENT DISAPPEARANCE NEVER REACHED AS FAR AS NORTH AFRICA.

AND IN HIS POLLY GREGORIUS
STILL CHASED THE SERPENT,
AND THE SERPENT STILL
BLUDED HIM, LEAVING ONLY
MORE AND MORE TERRIBLE
SIGNS OF HIS OCCUPANCY AS
THE MONTHS WENT BY.



...AND
YOU KNOW THE
REST.

WE
WANT TO
HEAR FROM
YOUR MOUTH,
IN YOUR
WORDS.



FROM WHAT
I'VE GATHERED, IT
WAS THE WIFE OF ONE OF
THE MISSING VISITORS WHO
FINALLY DISCOVERED THE
TRUTH AND ALERTED
THE AUTHORITIES.

THIS WAS WHEN
THEY PUT GREGORIUS
UNDER SURVEILLANCE, AND
THEN THOSE MEN, THE
POLICE, WENT INTO THE
NEW HELL...

WITHOUT MAINTENANCE THE FOLLY HAD
BEGUN TO DEGRADE BADLY.

THE LIGHTS HAD FAILED
ON MANY OF THE LEVELS.
ITS WALLS COOLED, ITS
PITCH FITS SOLIDIFIED.



BUT AS THE OFFICERS ADVANCED IN SEARCH
OF GREGORIOUS THEY CAME UPON AMPLE
EVIDENCE THAT DESPITE ITS DECREPIT CONDITION,
THE NEW HELL WAS IN GOOD WORKING ORDER.



THERE WERE BODIES
EVERYWHERE.



THERE WERE HUMAN REMAINS SEATED
AND STRUNG, SOULS AND FLESH
AND SLIT TO DEATH.

THEIR TERROR GREW
WITH EVERY DOOR
THEY PRESSED OPEN.
EVERY RECKONATION
THEIR FEVERED EYES
FELL UPON.



TWO OF THE FOUR
WHO CROSSED THE
THRESHOLD NEVER
REACHED THE
CHAMBER AT ITS
CENTER.



... ONLY TO BE
WALLOWED IN SOME
CHOKED PASSAGE-
WAY AND ADDED TO
THE HUNDREDS WHO
HAD PERISHED IN
THE POLLY SINCE
SATIN WAS TAKEN
RESIDENCE.



TERROR OVERTOOK
THEM ON THEIR WAY
AND THEY FLED...

THERE WAS NO SIGN OF
SATIN, OF COURSE.
THERE WAS ONLY
GREGORIUS, THE MASTER
BULDER, FINDING NO ONE
TO INHABIT THE HOUSE
HE'D SWEATED OVER, HAD
OCCUPIED IT HIMSELF.



GREGORIUS DID NOT
RESIST HIS ARREST.



HE HAD WITH HIM A FEW DISCIPLES WHOM HE'D
MASTERED OVER THE YEARS. THEN, LIKE HIM, SEEMED
UNKNOWABLE CREATURES. BUT THERE WAS NOT A
TORTURE DEVICE IN THE BUILDING THEY HAD NOT
MADE THOROUGH AND MERCILESS USE OF.

INDEED HE SEEMED PLEASED THAT HE WOULD
HAVE A PLATFORM FROM WHICH HE COULD
BOAST HIS BUTCHERIES.

LATER AT HIS TRIAL, HE
SPOKE FREELY OF HIS
AMBITION AND HIS APPETITE
AND OF HOW MUCH MORE
BLOOD HE WOULD SPILL IF
THEY WOULD ONLY SET HIM
FREE TO DO SO.



"ENOUGH TO DROWN ALL
BELIEF AND ITS DELUSIONS--
AND STILL I'D NOT BE
SATISFIED, FOR GOD IS
ROTTING IN PARADISE, AND
SATAN IN THE ABYSS, AND
WHO IS TO STOP ME?"



HE WAS MUCH REVILED DURING THE TRIAL,
AND LATER IN THE ASYLUM WHERE, UNDER
SOME SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, HE DIED
BARELY TWO MONTHS LATER.



THE VATICAN EXPUNGED ALL REPORT
OF HIM FROM ITS RECORDS.



THE SEMINARIES FOUNDED IN HIS
UNHOLY NAME WERE DISSOLVED.



BUT THERE WERE THOSE
AMONG THE CARDINALS
WHO COULD NOT PUT
GREGORY'S UNREPENTANT
MILICE OUT OF THEIR
HEADS.



...AND
THAT'S ALL
I KNOW. THAT'S
ALL I CAN
TELL YOU, I
SWEAR.

THERE IS
ONE QUESTION
REMAINING...WHERE
WERE YOU ALL THE
TIME YOU WERE
SAID TO BE
GONE?

I...I WAS THERE.
I NEVER LEFT. I HID
FROM GREGORY'S, NOT
BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID, NOT
AT ALL. I SIMPLY SAW WHAT
HE WAS AND KNEW HE
NEEDED TO BE ALONE
TO BECOME IT.



AND THOSE CARDINALS, IN
THE PRIVACY OF THEIR DOUBTS,
WONDERED IF GREGORY
HAD NOT SUCCEEDED IN HIS
STRATEGY.



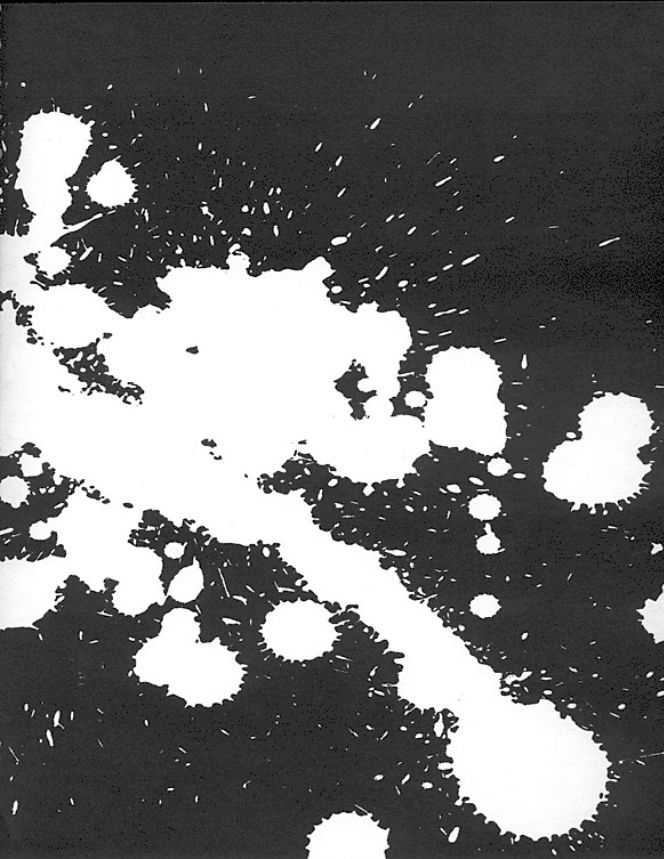
WELL, I
SUPPOSE THAT'S
ABOUT ALL.
THEN.

THEY WONDERED IF, IN GIVING
UP ALL HOPE OF ANGELA,
FALLEN OR OTHERWISE,
GREGORY HAD NOT BECOME
ONE HIMSELF.



OR ALL THAT EARTH COULD
BEAR OF SUCH A PHENOMENON.

The End





Once again, highly acclaimed novelist and filmmaker Clive Barker delivers chilling glimpses into the souls of men and the heart of darkness. The author of the best-selling novel *Imajica* spins two tales of murder and magic guaranteed to satisfy connoisseurs of both horror fiction and graphic art.

TAPPING THE VEIN

HOW SPOILERS BLEED
Hector Gomez

DOWN, SATAN
Tim Conrad

ECLIPSE BOOKS